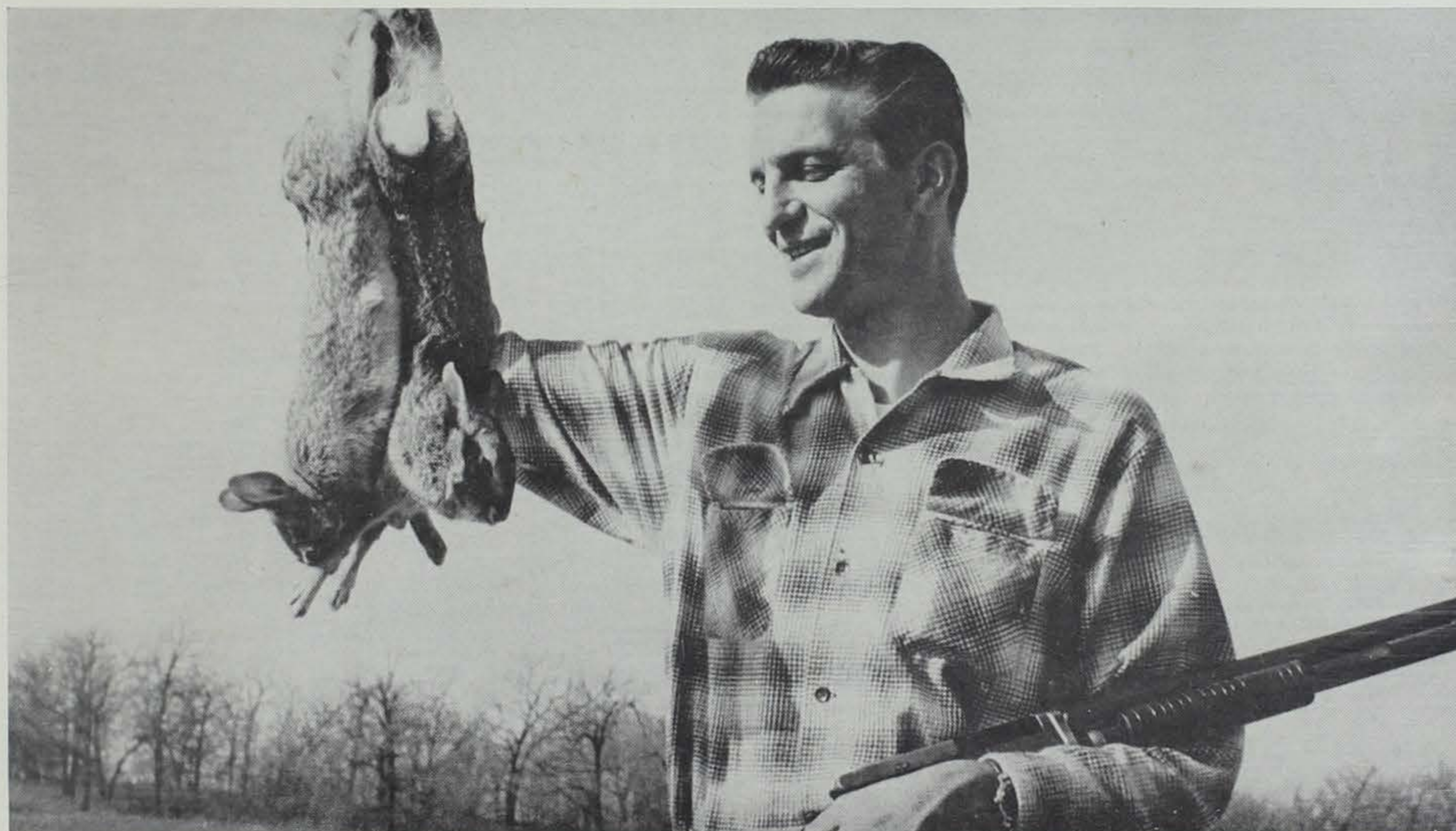


Volume 25

January, 1966

Number 1



Ol' Cottontail supplies hours of hunting fun to nearly 180,000 Iowa Hunters each fall and winter.

Jack Kirstein Photo

THE PARADOXICAL COTTONTAIL

M. E. Stempel
Game Biologist

More than 2,000,000 cottontail rabbits are harvested annually by nearly 180,000 licensed Iowa hunters. Eighty percent of these are taken in December and January. By comparison, the 1964 harvest figures for the next two most popular game species are 1,484,400 pheasants and 1,111,290 squirrels. These figures, taken from the annual postcard survey, give us our first paradox: while more cottontails are taken than any one of the other small game species, the rabbit hunters are fewer in number!

Our second paradox is that rabbit hunting is most popular in winter months when the ranks of cottontails have been lowered through predation, accident and disease. Some hunters express their reasons for this by saying such things as "Rabbits are better then; most of the other seasons are closed; rabbits are easiest to find in winter; and I like to hunt when it's cold."

The above paradoxes deal just with the hunting aspects. Let's take a look at some of the inconsistencies of ol' cottontail himself. When newly born he's sightless, hairless, and just about the most helpless thing imaginable; yet given a favorable year, his numbers soar with relative ease. He flourishes in fields where brushy cover and corn are adjacent; yet cottontail has never been evicted from cities and towns.

When he grows to adulthood, fleetfoot is still defenseless; yet he escapes destruction time after time after time. His future rests on the protection afforded by his radar-type ears, legs adapted to broken field running and two bulging eyes that detect movement ahead, beside and behind. Yes, rabbits are funny creatures who will leave a warm burrow and sit in the cold snow on a winter eve just to watch the sun go down. Still, this animal of paradoxical habits remains the all-time favorite game species because he is adaptable and wary.

Pleasant Winter Days Offer Good Hunting

The most productive rabbit shooting is on warm, sunny days during a period of moderate weather when the snow is melting slightly. Ol' cottontail is out then, and he leaves plenty of tracks to mark his feeding, resting and travel areas. Morning is a prime time for hunting him—that the hunter knows. This is evident when you go out-of-doors and hear the "ka-POW!" of shotguns echoing across the countryside.

Cold weather is fine for hunting—if you can take it. Fewer rabbits will be seen per hour of hunting time; and when cover such as brush piles and stump piles is plentiful, you may see no rabbits at all. This is due to the rabbit's reaction to weather changes. For when the barometer unwinds, when the wind whines in the fence wires, and you

(Continued on page 6)

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CIRCULATION THIS ISSUE 55,000

COMMISSION MINUTES

December 7 and 8, 1965
Des Moines, Iowa

LANDS AND WATERS

A request was granted to cut an additional channel through the shore-line of Lake Manawa in Pottawattamie County to a lagoon owned by Rosenberg and, approval was given to accept a gift of an area adjacent to the lagoon 100 feet wide for public use.

Approval was given to the Interstate Power Company to purchase an additional .088 acre of land adjacent to recently acquired land in Beaver Slough, Clinton County, at a rate of \$1,176.00 per acre, the same as a tract previously conveyed.

Approval was also given to a contract to Homer Focht of Red Oak for the completion of a dam and sewage lagoon at Lake Anita at a total cost of \$29,034.76.

Approval was given to a construction contract for a custodian's residence at Lake Anita to the Wetzel Construction Company of Audubon for \$17,936.32.

A contract was approved to Mr. Chase for a winter concession at Lake Macbride State Park to provide ice fishermen with facilities such as fishing shelters, gas heaters, ice motors and boats, transportation on the lakes, ice auger for drilling holes, bait and food for a period of three years.

Approval was given for five year concession contracts for Brown's Lake, Geode State Park, Green Valley Park, Ledges State Park; three years contract at Lake of Three Fires State Park. A one year contract was approved for Pikes Peak State Park.

Approval was given for \$16,000.00 Emergency Funds to be requested from the State Executive Council to replace a service building and contents destroyed by fire at Union Grove.

Approval was given to a schedule of prices for nursery stock at the State Forest Nursery at Ames.

A contract for aerial survey work at 10,470 acres at Stephens

Forest at a cost of \$6,150.00 was awarded to the Tri-States Aero Engineering Company.

FISH AND GAME

A proposal for a land trade with the Izaak Walton League at Dudgeon Lake in Benton County was approved.

Jurisdiction was given to the State Highway Commission on approximately five acres of land along the west edge of Round Lake in Harrison County for use in construction of Interstate 29.

The Conservation Commission recommended to the State Executive Council that approval be given for transfer of a pond at Eagle Grove to that city for recreational use.

It was voted to exercise an option on 206 acres of land three miles south of Lakeview in Sac County at a total cost of \$30,900.00. The option will also be presented to the American Game Association for their approval, and they may spend up to \$15,000.00 to acquire it. The State would then pay the balance of the option price, however, if the American Game Association does not approve the project, the State would be obligated for the entire amount. Approval was also given to exercise an option for 42 acres at a total cost of \$150.00 per acre in Kossuth County under the same agreement.

Approval was given for a change in the Deer License procedure to allow a person to have a deer license on his third application if he has been turned down both of the two previous years.

The Commission approved the Directors authority to allow promiscuous fishing in cases of oxygen decline.

The Commission granted construction permit for a power line to cross Center Lake Access.

COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD PROJECTS

Adair County received approval for the acquisition of 40 acres of land at a total cost of \$6,700.00 as an addition to the Mormon Trail Park which will complete the acquisition for this multiple-use outdoor recreation area.

Cerro Gordo County received approval for the acquisition of 24.3 acres of land at a total cost of \$4,394.00 as part of the County Conservation Board Project to acquire all the land adjacent to the Shell Rock River between Wilkinson County Park and the Shell Rock River Preserve.

Chickasaw County received approval for the acquisition of 1.25 additional acres of land at a total cost of \$56.25 as an addition to Goodale Wildlife Area located in northwestern part of the county.

Chickasaw County received approval for the acquisition of one acre of land by transfer from the County Board of Supervisors at no cost for the purpose of creating a Highway Safety Rest Area adja-

cent to U. S. Highway 63 in the Southern part of that county.

Sac County received approval for the acquisition of 40 acres of land at a total cost of \$6,000.00 called Reiff Safety Rest Area for the purpose of developing a road side park and camping area adjacent to the west side of U. S. Highway 20 and 71 near the town of Early.

Wright County received approval for the acquisition of 25 acres of land as a gift for the development of a wildlife area located approximately one mile southeast of the town of Belmont to be called the Linbaugh Wildlife Area.

Wright County received approval for the acquisition of three parcels of land from three separate property owners by a 10-year lease at a cost of \$1.00 each. Two of these tracts of land, each containing .17 acres, join one another on adjoining farms. The third is a much larger area containing 17.25 acres of land. All of the areas will be planted for nesting and winter cover for upland game and game birds. Assistance will be given by the Game Section of the State Conservation Commission and personnel of the Soil Conservation Service in planting these areas.

Delaware County received approval for the development of the 42.49 acre Hard Scrabble Park for picnicking, camping and scenic overlooks.

Bremer County Conservation Board received approval for the acquisition of 170 acres of land at a total cost of \$6,250.00 for the purpose of developing a county park and wildlife area two and one-half miles northwest of Waverly, for picnicking, camping, scenic overlooks, wildlife sanctuary and winter game cover.

Cerro Gordo County received approval for the acquisition of 10 acres of land at a total cost of \$1,500.00 as an addition to their acquisition project along the Shell Rock River.

Lee County received approval for the acquisition of four acres of land at no cost for the purpose of developing a fishing access to the Skunk River from the Lee County Board of Supervisors.

Lee County received approval for the acquisition of 14.36 acres of land at no cost for the purpose of developing a Highway Safety Rest Area, picnicking and camping area, and access to the Skunk River adjacent to the southeast corner of the Highway 61 Skunk River Bridge. This land was obtained from the County Board of Supervisors.

Lee County received approval for the acquisition of 74.52 acres of land at a total cost of \$7,744.00 for the purpose of developing a multiple-use outdoor recreation area located approximately three miles east of the town of Donnellson, and includes a farm pond of approximately 10 acres and a stand of hardwood trees.

GENERAL

Travel was approved to the Minnesota Wildlife Society Meeting at St. Paul; the Annual Wing Bee Session at Poynette, Wisconsin; the Upper Mississippi Conservation Commission Meeting at St. Louis; the Boat Registration Department at Madison, Wisconsin; and various Blanket Travel Authorities to adjacent counties outside the state were approved.

A system of replacement of film for field personnel was approved.

Purchase of winter dress uniforms for Law Enforcement personnel was approved.

An option for \$10,000.00 and one-half acre in trade for 8.67 acres in the Casino Bay area at Storm Lake was approved.

Approval was given to a letter of intent to be written by the Director stating that the Commission will develop recreational areas in relation to the proposed Jefferson Reservoir on the Racoon River providing adequate funds become available, after hearing an explanation of this project by the Corp of Engineers from Rock Island.

The Commission met with representatives from Marcus, Iowa, concerning disposal of U. S. Government surplus building in that city.

Approval was given to participation in the construction of a road at Lake Manawa in cooperation with the Iowa State Highway Commission and the County Board of Supervisors if agreement can be reached.

Informational items included a report by the Planning Section on the status of a state-wide plan; the proposed water draw-down of Prairie Rose Lake in Shelby County to allow construction of causeway and beach; a report on a meeting with the Minnesota Conservation Department Concerning the water level of Tuttle Lake; the construction of a drive-in restaurant at the entrance to Lake Manawa; the Superintendent of Parks gave a report on docks at Union Grove; and the Assistant Attorney General, Bob Scism gave a report on Missouri River Land Acquisition progress. It was then moved and carried that the Commission ask the State Executive Council for Emergency Funds to survey and plat all land under question along the Missouri River.

Hunter-purchased duck stamps have contributed \$80 million to the nation's waterfowl program. The stamp price has increased over the years at the sportsmen's insistence.

A five year study of insurance claims showed hunting was 16th on the list of "dangerous" sports. In that period there were 777 hunting claims and 4,318 from football. Hunting was also outnumbered by 824 accidents in theaters, concerts and churches.

Conservation Forum

Dear Sir:

Why don't all the camping areas near these nice fishing holes [trout streams in northeast Iowa] have outdoor plumbing? There were 26 of us camped on French [Creek] a year ago Labor Day. It is a real nice spot to camp, but badly in need of toilets.

G. V.
Greene, Iowa

The primary concerns of the Fisheries Section are the acquisition of streams, stream improvement and maintenance of quality fishing. Since funds to promote these programs come from the sale of fishing licenses, they cannot be diverted to other uses. Also, the scattered location of these areas make it impractical to construct, maintain and manage sanitary facilities except in a few heavily used areas near some of the hatcheries.—Editor

Dear Sir:

About two weeks ago a friend of mine and I wrote the National Wildlife Federation for permission to use a harmless snare for capturing one or two redtailed hawks. They said we had to write to our state conservation commission to get permission.

So we request your permission to capture one or two redtailed hawks with a harmless snare.

We are going to try and train them for falconry. If we are not successful we will release them unharmed. Please send us your answer.

R. J.
Sibley, Iowa

The Conservation Commission cannot give you permission to trap a redtail hawk. This hawk is protected by the Code of Iowa. The only hawks that are not protected are sharpshinned hawk and Copper's hawk. You could possess one of these hawks and train it if you wish.

—Editor



Jim Sherman Photo

The ever watchful mountain lion is symbolic of the IOWA CONSERVATIONIST'S awareness of use and management problems regarding our natural resources.

CONSERVATION AWARDS

Staff writers for the CONSERVATIONIST are given three rules of writing: write what is true; make it factual; and above all, make it whet the reader's interest. Many readers make it a point to let the CONSERVATIONIST know that it is doing a good job adhering to the rules. Now, the Iowa Wildlife Federation has joined the chorus and named the magazine as being first-rate.

Federation recognition came in the form of a reproduction of a sculptured mountain lion on a pedestal to which the following words are affixed: "Conservation Communications Award for 1965, presented to IOWA CONSERVATIONIST . . . for outstanding contributions to the wise use and management of the nation's natural resources."

This is the first time the award has ever been given. It is part of the national awards program currently being sponsored by the National Wildlife Federation and the Sears-Roebuck Foundation.

Jim Sherman, Superintendent of Public Relations and editor of the CONSERVATIONIST, accepted the award from Governor Harold E. Hughes at the first annual Governor's Award Banquet at the Hotel Savery in Des Moines on November 20.

Also recognized for their contributions to conservation efforts in Iowa were: Dr. Arnold A. Haugen, Ames, named Conservationist of the Year; Dr. James Carruthers of Ackley, who received the Wildlife Conservationist of the year award; Ernest E. Behn, Boone, who took the Soil Conservationist of the year award; while Robert Buckmaster, Waterloo, was singled out as Water Conservationist of the year.

Forest Conservationist of the year was R. W. Daubendiek, Decorah; Bernard Clausen, Cedar Falls, was named Conservation Educator, while Donald Peterson was named as Youth Conservationist of the year.

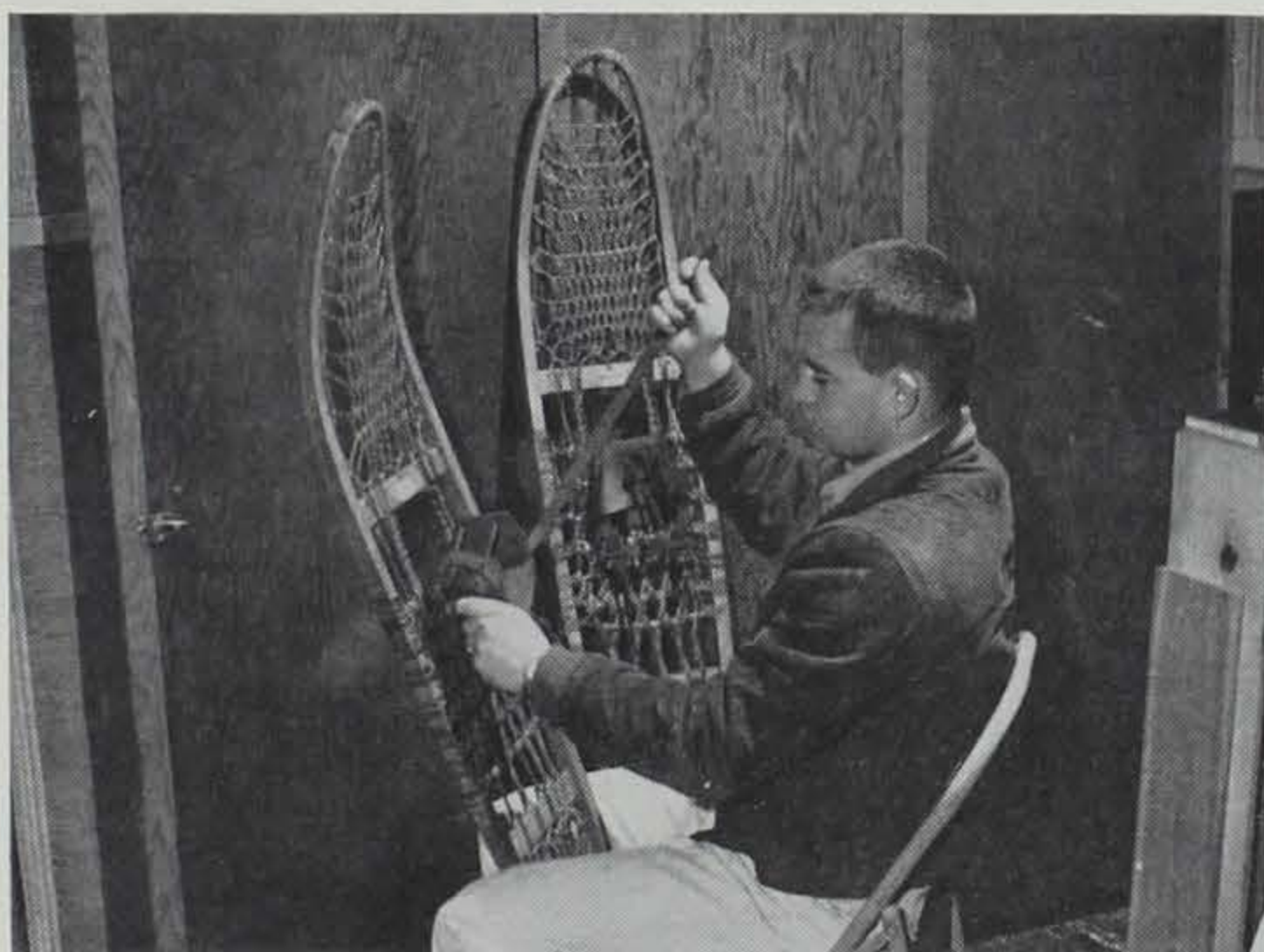
In the field of legislative efforts, the top award was given to Representative James V. Gallagher of Waterloo. Fletcher Boehm, president of the Delaware Fish & Game Protective Association, picked up the award of Conservation Organization of the year for his club.—J. H.

Game can be tracked without plowing through frozen crusts of snow, hills can be readily climbed, and drifts are quickly surmounted.

Snow shoes can be either handmade, or purchased through a reputable sports outfitter. If you choose to buy a ready made pair, you'll probably have to have them ordered out, as the demand for webs in Iowa is practically non-existent. Most sporting goods stores will be happy to do this for you though.

Snow shoe mushers in Canada seem to prefer a design that was developed in Europe. This type web is about 3½ feet long and 15 to 18 inches at its broadest point, slightly turned up at the toe and ending in a kind of tail. The frame is made from a single strip of durable wood that has been soaked so that it can be properly curved round until the two ends meet to form the tail. The middle is supported by a

(Continued on page 6)



Jack Kirstein Photo

Discarded by our ancestors, webs appear to be on the come-back trail as a winter sport.

Snow Shoeing — The Coming Sport

Jack Higgins

The stuff that makes winter camping and winter sports great is snow—and lots of it. Unfortunately, the "lots of it" angle is precisely what turns many an otherwise avid out-doors man into a slouching TV addict!

Fortunately we don't have to wait for an invention to free us from an over-dose of snow. The American Indians, the Eskimos, and even our European ancestors took care of that centuries ago when they made snow shoes part of their standard equipment. For some reason the snow shoe was discarded by many early Americans, and so we have no historical background for its use today.

Such is not the case in Canada, however, as snow shoe clubs have long been popular there. These clubs meet regularly throughout the winter months. Their activities include cross country races, hurdle jumping contests (the hurdles are over 3 feet high), and club camp-outs.

Many camping enthusiasts in the U. S. are now insisting that winter camping can't be done unless all the campers have a pair of webs. It is doubtful if this is wholly true, but then their basic idea is correct. Snow shoes do give a new dimension of mobility to the individual.

SHOOTING IS CONSERVATION, TOO!

William E. Towell, Director
Missouri Conservation Commission

Resource administrators are seeking ways where those not necessarily interested in taking wildlife by hunting or fishing can share in wildlife management and research costs. The nature lover, hiker, bird watcher and others frequently referred to as protectionists have, we believe, a stake in wildlife and a financial obligation, too.

As a conservation administrator I have appeared before many state legislative and congressional committees in support of conservation measures. Conservationists constitute a powerful political force—but not alone for hunting and fishing opportunities. We have spearheaded the national water pollution control movement, outdoor recreation legislation, control of pesticides, soil and water management legislation, public lands protection and many conservation measures not directly benefitting our license customers. We appreciate the help of the protectionist in these activities and want him to be just as proud of our association as we are to work with him. But, take away hunting and fishing as incentives, and most organized conservation effort in this country will die.

I can cite for you examples where hunting has accelerated the comeback of wildlife species. For many years in the Missouri Ozarks our deer herd was practically wiped out. We were losing ground through year-round illegal hunting, running by dogs, and an attitude of hopelessness by nearly everyone. We began reintroducing deer in select areas where we were assured of protection by local residents. But we also began limited open seasons wherever the herd was sufficiently established. Illegal activities quickly diminished when there was an opportunity for a legal kill. Open seasons brought better protection and greatly accelerated the deer increase. I am convinced that if the season had not been opened twenty years ago that our deer would be near extinction today. Compared to an estimated statewide deer population of two or three thousand in 1940, we harvested 18,000 in a seven-day open season last fall.

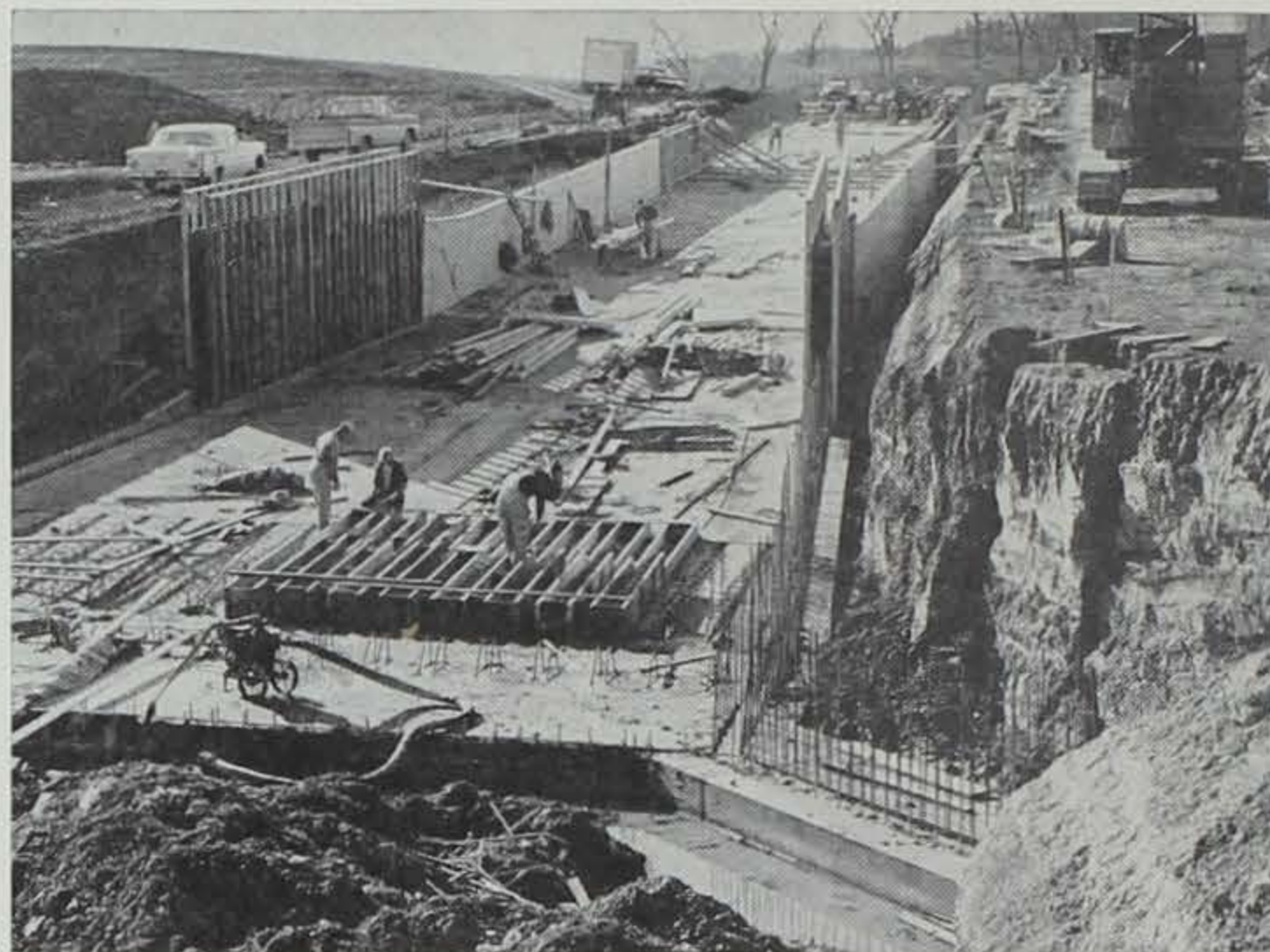
We are experiencing a similar comeback of wild turkeys under management that includes a spring hunting season for gobblers. Turkey production never seemed to gain much headway with total protection. Only after we opened the season (against much protest) did the turkeys begin to show real signs of an expanding population. There are other factors, certainly, besides hunting that may be responsible. Fire control and more mature forest stands have played a significant part. Better protection, particularly against summer poaching, has helped. But, again, like deer, we are many years ahead of where we would have been without hunting. We know because we tried the other way for twenty-five years without success.

No phase of public game administration has received more criticism than managed public waterfowl shooting areas. We are accused of luring ducks and geese into refuges, then subjecting them to wanton slaughter. This has been a fertile field for public indignation; it has been exploited in several articles and editorials. Using our famed Swan Lake goose flock as another example, however, shooting again is good conservation, and anyone who likens it to shooting fish in a barrel just hasn't been there. Pits are 400 yards apart and they are assigned by impartial drawing. Some are good; others consistently non-productive. None are refilled if the assigned hunters are successful. Hunting is just as natural, as difficult, and as sporting as we can keep it, but this is another story in itself. Thousands of satisfied visitors have compared it favorably with the best they ever experienced on marsh or stream.

The important consideration is the goose management itself and hunting is an essential part of that management. Through such refuges as Swan Lake, with protection during vulnerable periods and an abundance of high quality foods, whole new flocks of geese have been built up that never existed before. This Swan Lake flock numbers as high as 150,000 Canadas—many more than the refuge can sustain. Terminate the refuge and the flock would not be dispersed, it would be destroyed. These birds must be kept in balance with capability of the area to support them. This can be accomplished only by hunting.

Biologists tell us that more Canada geese travel our flyways today than the Indian ever knew. They are convincing in their explanation that breeding grounds in the far North are almost unlimited. The limiting factor in goose production is on these southern wintering grounds and during their migrations. With refuge protection plus an assured supply of high quality foods, larger and larger numbers can be returned to the northern breeding grounds in better condition for reproduction. Whole new flocks of geese can be established through such refuge developments as Swan Lake, Horicon and Horseshoe Lake. Without some control of their numbers, however, serious depredation of adjoining farm crops will occur. Disease, too, can step in where overcrowding exists and accomplish the same reduction that we accomplish by hunting. Our first obligation is to know what that harvest

(Continued on page 6)



Miami Lake's spillway nears completion as the time for permanent water storage approaches. Jack Kirstein Photos

MIAMI LAKE NEARS COMPLETION

Glen Yates

Superintendent of Federal Aid

Miami Lake, the Iowa Conservation Commission's second small fishing lake (See "Iowa Fishermen Buy a Lake," August, 1964), is nearing completion. When spring arrives it will be ready to stock with warm water fish which will include such species as largemouth bass, bluegill, crappie and catfish.

Miami Lake is located in the east central part of Monroe County, about six miles northeast of Albia and about equal distance from Oskaloosa and Ottumwa.

The 145 acre lake contains 1,720 acre feet of water and has a maximum depth of 21 feet. The lake is approximately 1 1/4 miles in length, has 16,400 feet (nearly three miles) of shore line, and is backed up by 3,900 acres of watershed. Water depths are in excess of 12 feet in approximately 55 percent of the lake. Twenty percent of the surface area has depths of six feet or less.

The 535 acres of land acquired for Miami Lake was purchased and is being developed with Dingell-Johnson funds and Iowa Fishing License fees. D-J funds come from a 10 percent federal excise tax on most sport fishing equipment. Seventy-five percent of the money being used is from this federal source. So, it goes without saying that the Iowa fisherman is paying the entire bill.

Before any federal funds could be obligated for acquisition and development, a preliminary project statement, plans, specifications and cost estimates and many other reports were submitted to the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife for their consideration and approval.

Natural drainage ways throughout the watershed area are well established and are typical of this

portion of the state. Extensive row crop farming has proved unsatisfactory on the steeper slopes and is practiced on only flat, upland fields and in isolated, small, irregular patches on the first flood plain terrace. Permanent legume seedings, pasture and timber provide most of the cover on the steeper slopes. Many farm ponds have been built for livestock and domestic water supply uses. If these practices continue and the present silt load of the stream remains about the same, the life expectancy of the impoundment will be well in excess of 75 years. Considering these and other factors, one can predict that Miami Lake will have quality water and have a good fisheries potential.

The area above the lake will be managed for such upland game species as pheasant, quail, squirrel, and rabbits. It will also provide excellent deer habitat.

The Monroe County Conservation Board is going to develop an adjacent 40 acre tract for use by campers and picnickers. And although there are no current provisions for a beach area, the local board may decide to create one at a later date.

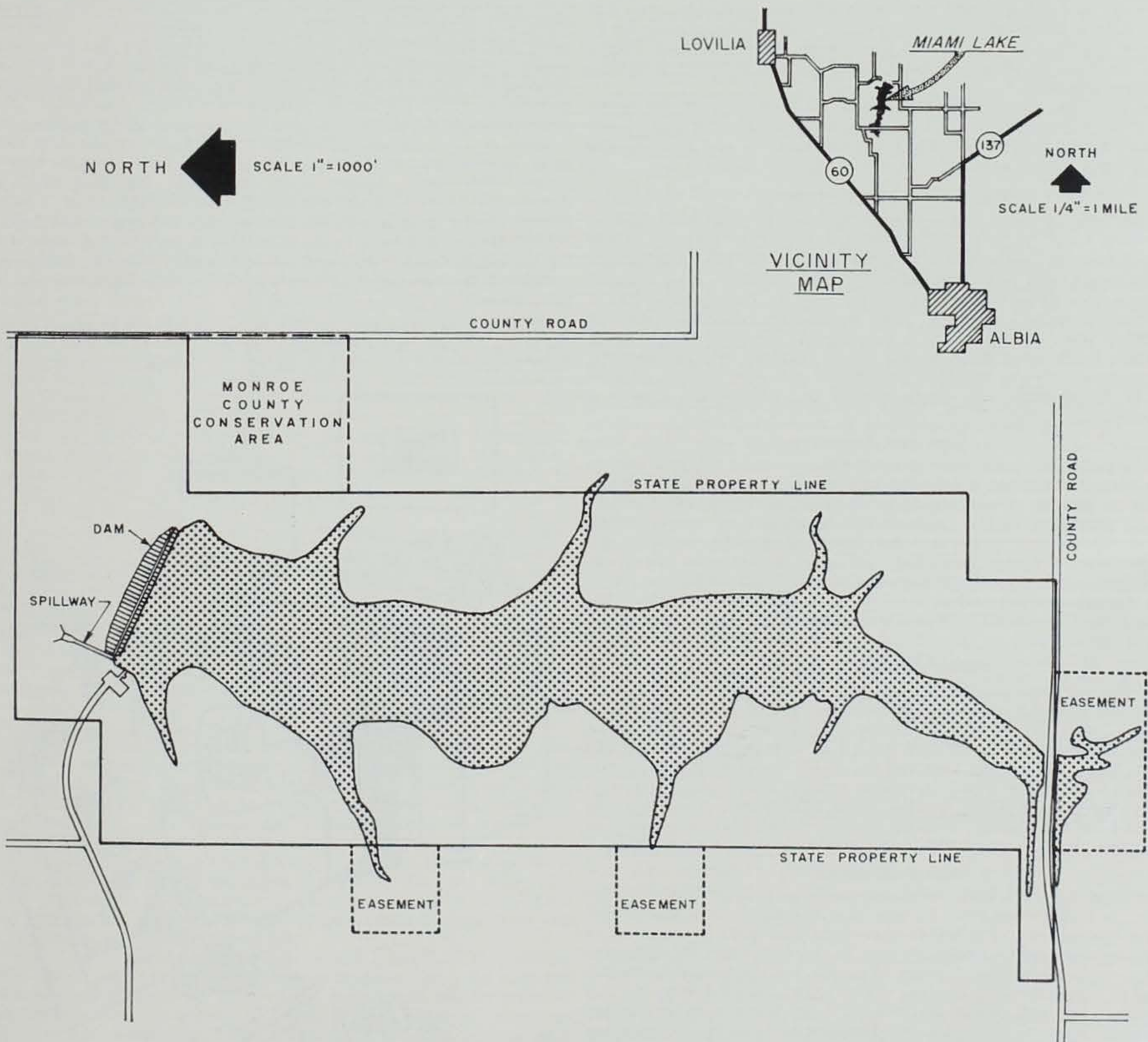
Because of the size of Miami Lake, current policy will allow the use of motor boats. Motor size will be restricted to a maximum of 6 1/2 h.p., though. This will give mobility to the fisherman, yet protect the water from excessive riling due to wave action.

At the present time plans are for the continuation of the acquisition and development of small fishing lakes with the use of Dingell-Johnson funds.

Under the Federal Aid in Wildlife Act, enacted in 1937, about 2.5 million acres of land have been acquired for wildlife. Money for the projects has come from a hunter-sponsored tax on fire arms and ammunition.



Come spring thaw and spring rains, this valley floor will become Miami Lake. Water will lap at the base of this hill (foreground) and spread up the timbered finger to the right. The picture was taken about midway between the first two "fingers" on the east shore of the lake (see map below). Bluff Creek flows north at this point and its present bed can be seen about the middle of the picture. Some water has already collected above the dam.



THE PARADOXICAL COTTONTAIL—

(Continued from page 1)



Warm, sunny days and melting snows are the basic ingredients of a successful rabbit hunt.

must feel your nose with your hand to see if it is still there, then "spookiness" is engendered in the cottontail.

After the cold subsides and weather is pleasant once more, you will find cottontails crawling from burrows, and from under brush piles to fluff their hair and to peek at the world from the edge of the covert. This is the time to employ a quiet approach and combine it with a well aimed rifle shot.

Snow days are productive, but there's no need to wait for snow. Some of the finest and sportiest shooting (and the poorest scores) are recorded on mild winter days when there is no snow and you get into good territory where gunning is of the snap-shoot variety.

Where Are the Cottontails?

For the past 15 years, the cottontail populations have been highest in southern Iowa. In order of importance, the other portions of the state was rated in numbers of rabbits as follows: the west was second, then the north, and finally the east. In 1965 southern Iowa escaped the destructive force of the late winter snows. Therefore, it has a higher than average population. High populations continually flourish in southern Iowa because there is considerable amounts of low-grade land which bears much good brushy cover. Hunters in other portions of the state can always find fine, though less extensive coverts. Where ever real, substantial cover exists, rabbits will survive and develop a fine population.

Guns and Ammo

Twelve gauge shotguns are the most common sized weapon used in taking cottontails. This is followed in close succession by the 16, 20, 410 and 28 gauges. Repeating and automatic shotguns are much in favor, as are many of the older doubles which are no longer manufactured. This latter group includes the L. C. Smiths, Parkers and Ithacas. There are also sprinklings of some of the truly fine grade foreign makes such as the Keieghoffs or Mantons. Then, too, on a winter day when sound carries for a distance, you may often hear the reverberating "Ka-LOOM!" of an old time black powder muzzle loader someone has restored.

Public Hunting Areas

Most hunters have access to some private land where they can do some rabbit shooting. If you have problems in this respect, however, there are many public shooting areas. Examples in each of the 4 quarters of the state are: Smith's Slough at Ruthven; Chickasaw Mill at Ionia, Lakin Slough near Yale and the Eldon Game Area near Eldon. There are many other areas, of course, and for those unfamiliar with them, a directory of public hunting areas is available. These may be obtained from the Public Relations Section of the State Conservation Commission, or from most Fish and Game Department employees.

Some Suggestions

Before the hunt, be sure to check your equipment. Pattern your shotgun, or target your rifle. Be sure that the ammo is of the correct type for the gun you're going to take with you. And if you're to be hunting in very cold weather, say zero Fahrenheit, wash the lubricant out of the gun mechanism (unless, of course, it's the kind that doesn't congeal in extreme cold.) Replace the oil with a dry lubricant.

Finally, a dog that works well is a big help. Bassets or beagles are first choice. Don't overlook the fine possibilities of using just any dog that knows about these paradoxical cottontails!

SNOW SHOEING—THE COMING SPORT—

(Continued from page 3)

light cross-bar. The inner space is then filled with a webbing (hence the nick-name "webs") that is made by weaving strips of hide into a closely woven pattern. A small open space is left just behind the cross-bar for the toe of the boot. The shoe is tied to the foot with leather thongs.

There are at least two ways to walk in snow shoes. One is the slow back and forth waddle walk that looks much like a poor imitation of a duck. The other is a forward movement that allows the broad portion of one shoe to slip across the face of the resting shoe. The latter is, perhaps, the most difficult walk to master, but it pays off in less fatigue for the walker.

Snow shoeing for sport and sheer pleasure is about at the same point skiing was a few years back. At that time only a few dyed-in-the-wool skiers kept the sport alive so that it could be "discovered." Perhaps this will be the year that Iowans discover both the snow shoe, and the winter adventures awaiting them at our many State Parks and Forest areas.

SHOOTING IS CONSERVATION, TOO!—

(Continued from page 4)

can safely be and then to see that it is accomplished in a humane, sportsmanlike manner. Maintaining quality in hunting is also our responsibility.

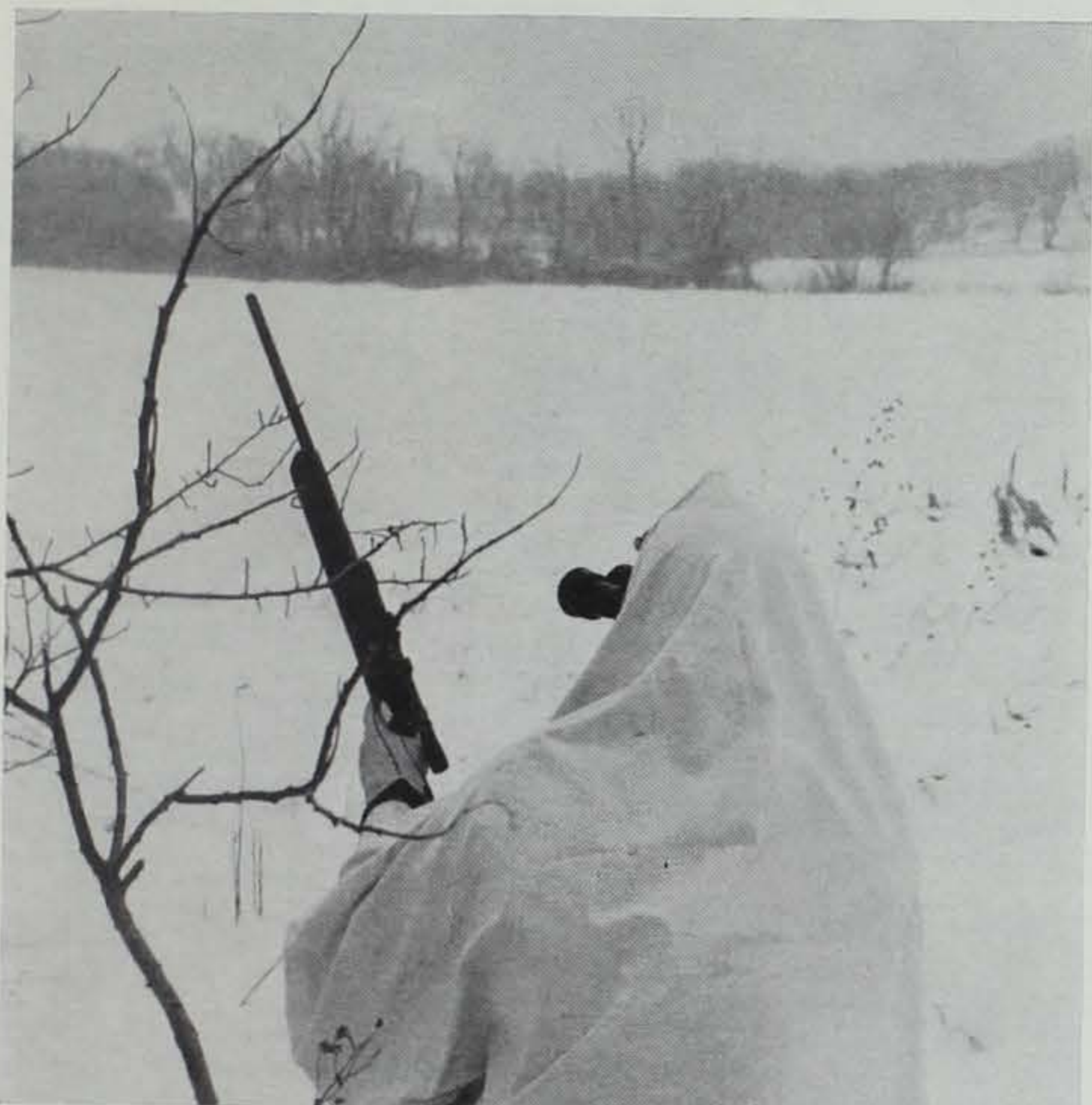
From the biological standpoint there are other sound arguments for hunting. Most species of game establish a population level constant with a given environment. Natural factors control that population. Even with no hunting the level remains about the same from year to year. Introduce hunting within safe limits and the population still remains the same. In other words, man's harvest of game can be substituted for nature's controls. It is a known wildlife fact that depressing a game population actually stimulates production. It is a proven biological paradox that you can take your game and have it, too.

What is a safe harvest of wildlife? This has confused more fish and game commissions and legislatures than any other decision they must make. Fortunately, nature is on their side, for most small game species the harvest is self-regulating. Legal methods of hunting or fishing during proper seasons seldom will endanger wild creatures. When numbers get down to the point that it is difficult to take animals for the bag or fish for the creel, interest quickly falls off. This is nearly always within safe limits of an adequate breeding stock for next year's production.

Editor's Note: The first half of Mr. Towell's article can be found in the October, 1965, IOWA CONSERVATIONIST.



STALKING THE WILY COYOTE



White, lightweight clothing, binoculars and a gun combine to help the coyote hunter "reach out" for his prey.

Jack Kirstein Photo

Paul D. Kline

Assistant Superintendent of Game

Fox hunters, sit up and take notice! There's big game afoot! If pursuit of Reynard touches you like ho-hum, then here's a challenge. Stalk and bag a coyote. Yes, it can be done right here in Iowa.

To the critical observer who has seen the many coyotes in western or southwestern states, this may seem like a puny challenge. But under Iowa conditions without aid of dogs, airplane spotters, or walkie-talkies it can be demanding hunting sport. First of all there are not many in this corn state: I would estimate somewhere between 4 and 5 thousand. Around 2,000 are bountied annually. This may sound like quite a few until you remember that over 100,000 foxes are bountied annually. That's a ratio of 50 foxes per coyote.

Not only are they relatively scarce but they are stronger and rangier than foxes. Some say that they are a whole lot smarter. I'm not so sure of this, but am convinced that they are much more difficult to bag. Jump a fox and he is apt to lay down within a mile. A coyote, on the other hand, may go three miles or more.

Most Iowa coyotes occur in the western counties bordering the Missouri River and in southern portions of the state. Occasional ones turn up throughout Iowa. They most commonly inhabit rolling, gully intersected terrain. Abundant brush and weed patches attract and protect them from the eyes of man.

Unlike most Iowa game species, coyotes probably are only as abundant as man will tolerate. They are big enough to do noticeable damage to chickens, sheep, and even small calves or pigs. Most coyotes eat rabbits and mice, and do no damage. Some do; and when it happens the human reaction is to cry "wolf" and then every coyote in the area is in trouble.

There is no need for argument about wolves. The coyote is a true wolf. In fact it commonly is called prairie or brush wolf. Seldom do they weigh more than 40 pounds. Average Iowa coyotes, I would say, weigh 28-30 pounds. Bigger ones do occur, but very often these are coyote-dog crosses. The true timber wolf, weighing 60 up to 150 pounds has not been found in Iowa for at least 50 years.

There is reason to believe that coyotes are on the increase in Iowa. But here again, only within the limits of tolerance by man. Our rural populations continue to diminish, particularly in southern Iowa. Less human interference should favor the species. I can foresee more and more coyotes in our southern loess hills.

As with foxes, there are many means and variations for hunting coyotes. Some use trailing hounds, others greyhounds; some organize circle hunts; some locate the quarry from the air and communicate by walkie-talkie. I have no quarrel with any of these methods, as long as people have fun. Personally, I feel, if hunted by stalking, coyotes offer the greatest challenge to be found in hunting Iowa game.

It is a demanding, even frustrating sport, requiring hard work and patience. Be prepared to walk. Sufficient snow for tracking is helpful but not essential. If snow is present wear white and lightweight clothing. Most people wear too much when hunting. If you trail a coyote in the snow you will be moving—exercising—and can easily work up a "sweat." Afield, I wear the same clothes as in the office plus a pair of white coveralls and a white nylon, hooded ski jacket. If the temperature is less than 20 degrees above and the wind blows, I add a lightweight and roomy jacket beneath the ski-jacket. On a trail, if I get too warm I can regulate warmth by removing a glove, or loosening the throat zipper of the ski jacket. Footwear should be light, waterproof, and warm. Insulated, rubber "packs" probably are best in the snow.

Sunglasses to avoid snow blindness, binoculars, and choice of gun are optional equipment. A scope on a rifle can substitute for binoculars. Coyotes can be killed with shotguns. If you prefer shotguns use 12 gauge or larger and nothing smaller than No. 2 shot. Many shotguns will pattern poorly with buckshot. If your gun is one of these, use BB's or No. 2 shot. A coyote even at close range can run right through a poor pattern of No. 4 buckshot.

If you prefer a rifle, use a high velocity modern caliber capable of providing at least 2,800 f.p.s. muzzle velocity. Bullets from such rifles will usually disintegrate on impact instead of ricocheting over the countryside causing consternation among farmers or livestockmen. In this respect such rifles are less dangerous than .22 rim-fires.

Now that you have your equipment, your problem is to find the quarry. With foxes this is often a matter of driving around the countryside, "glassing" over likely slopes where they lay out of the wind. Not so with coyotes. They tend to "lie heavy"; usually in dense weeds or brush where it is impossible to spot them from the road. If you have no idea where coyotes may occur talk to local sportsmen or farmers. If coyotes are around they may give you helpful tips.

In "coyote country" you can sometimes pick up a reasonably fresh track across the road. If so, and the track does not come out of the Section you are in business. Otherwise, you may have to walk through likely Sections just to find a track to follow. Experience will teach you what a coyote track looks like. Generally speaking, they are larger than foxes, slightly elongated. Coyotes stride about 20-22 inches, while foxes stride near 16 inches. Dog tracks may give trouble, but if you follow a dog track he will spend more time fooling around roads, fences, culverts, etc., than will most coyotes. His trail wanders more and seems less purposeful than those of most coyotes.

When you're on a fresh track, it's time to reflect. The idea is to locate the coyote, preferably before he knows you are after him. He has at least four things going for him: Excellent hearing and eyesight, a keen nose, and the ability to outrun you. You have two: Good eyesight and a weapon that will "reach out."

Always know where the wind is. It can blow your sound and scent to the coyote, or it can blow it away. Personally, I prefer a strong wind over little or no wind. A strong wind limits the places a coyote may sleep. Also, it muffles the sound of crunching snow or snapped twigs. You can use the wind to your advantage. If the track leads you upwind, follow the track. If it leads you downwind and where the coyote may be sleeping—heavy weeds, brush, or timber—it is often best to leave the trail and approach the cover "crosswind" so that the coyote won't hear or smell your approach. You can circle on the downwind side, peek into the cover, and watch for the emerging trail.

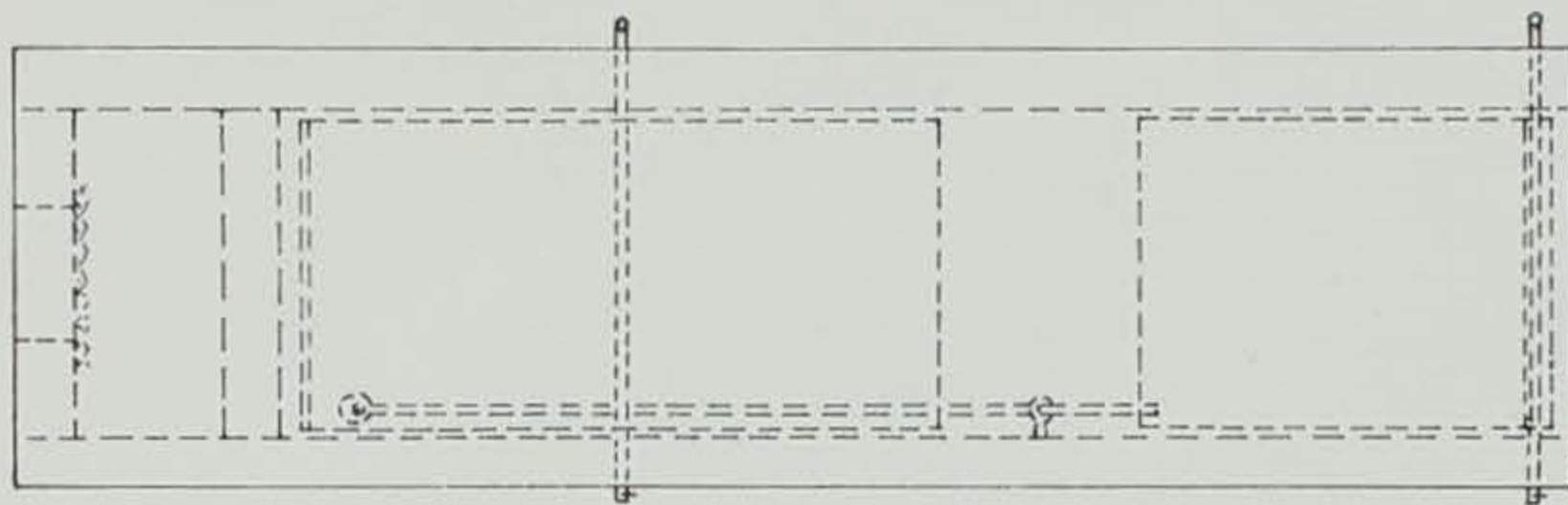
If you fail to see the coyote, the trail does not emerge, and the cover is too heavy or expansive to see into, then you have but one choice. Quietly as possible, move into the cover. Try to use the terrain so that you can see all exits in case the coyote runs or sneaks out. You may get the surprise of your life. These animals sometimes "lay tight," and permit a very close approach, particularly in heavy weeds or slough cover. They hope you will leave without discovering them. They have been known to jump out within a few feet of the hunter, like rabbits. One pheasant hunter knew the experience of having his bird dog point a coyote in a slough!

More times, however, they will sneak out quietly or "crash" through the weeds as soon as they are aware of your presence. If you have a shot and make it good, fine and dandy. If not, you may have a trailing chase that will take you miles away.

In any event, whether or not you bag or even sight the quarry, you will have enjoyed the ultimate in pure hunting sport. You have pitted yourself against Iowa's most canny game. And I would speculate that you will be back for more.

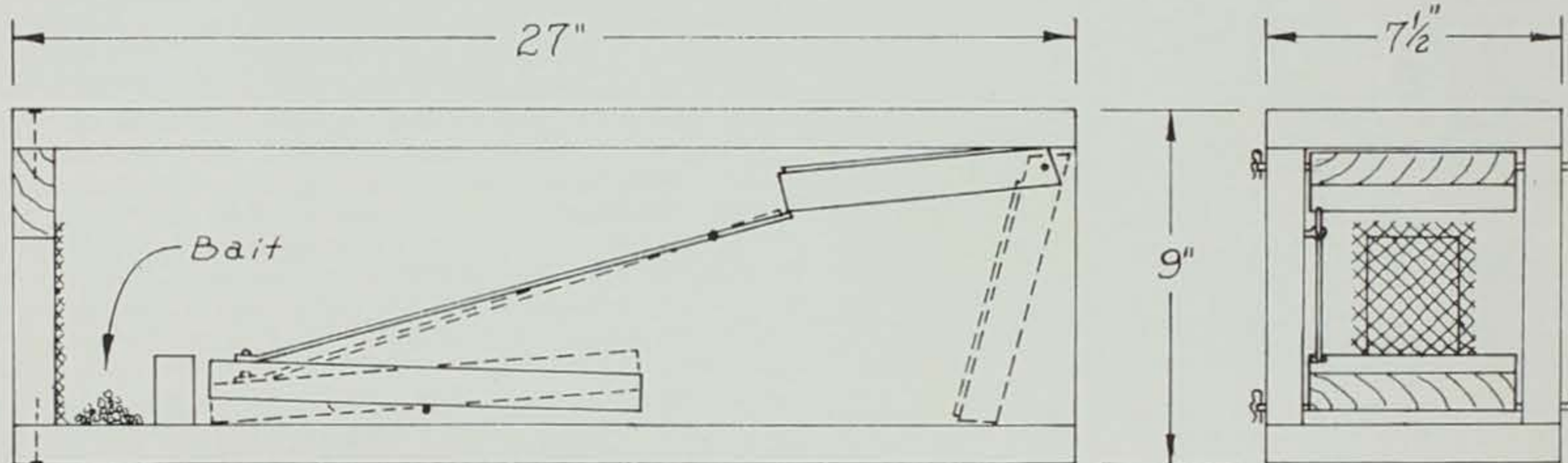
There are 34 states that have hunter-safety training programs for the public. Nineteen of these states require a certificate of course completion before a hunting license is issued. More than 2,000 U. S. landowner-hunters have switched from agriculture and livestock pursuits to recreational enterprises—including development of hunting and shooting facilities.

HOW TO TRAP A RABBIT



Treadle Trap

All traps must have metal tag attached showing owners name and address.



NOTE:

End of treadle trap opposite entrance must be screen wire or rabbit will not enter. The trigger on treadle trap may be stiff wire. Bait may be slice of apple, ear corn, or carrot. Set trap along known rabbit runs, near brush or weed patch.

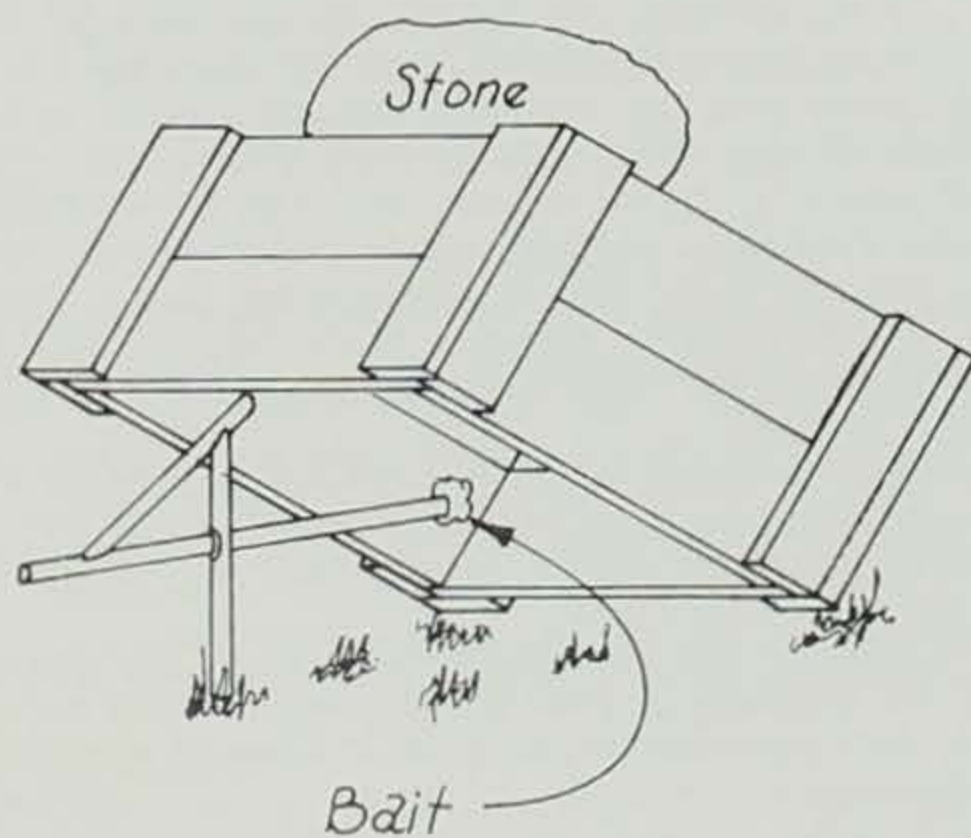
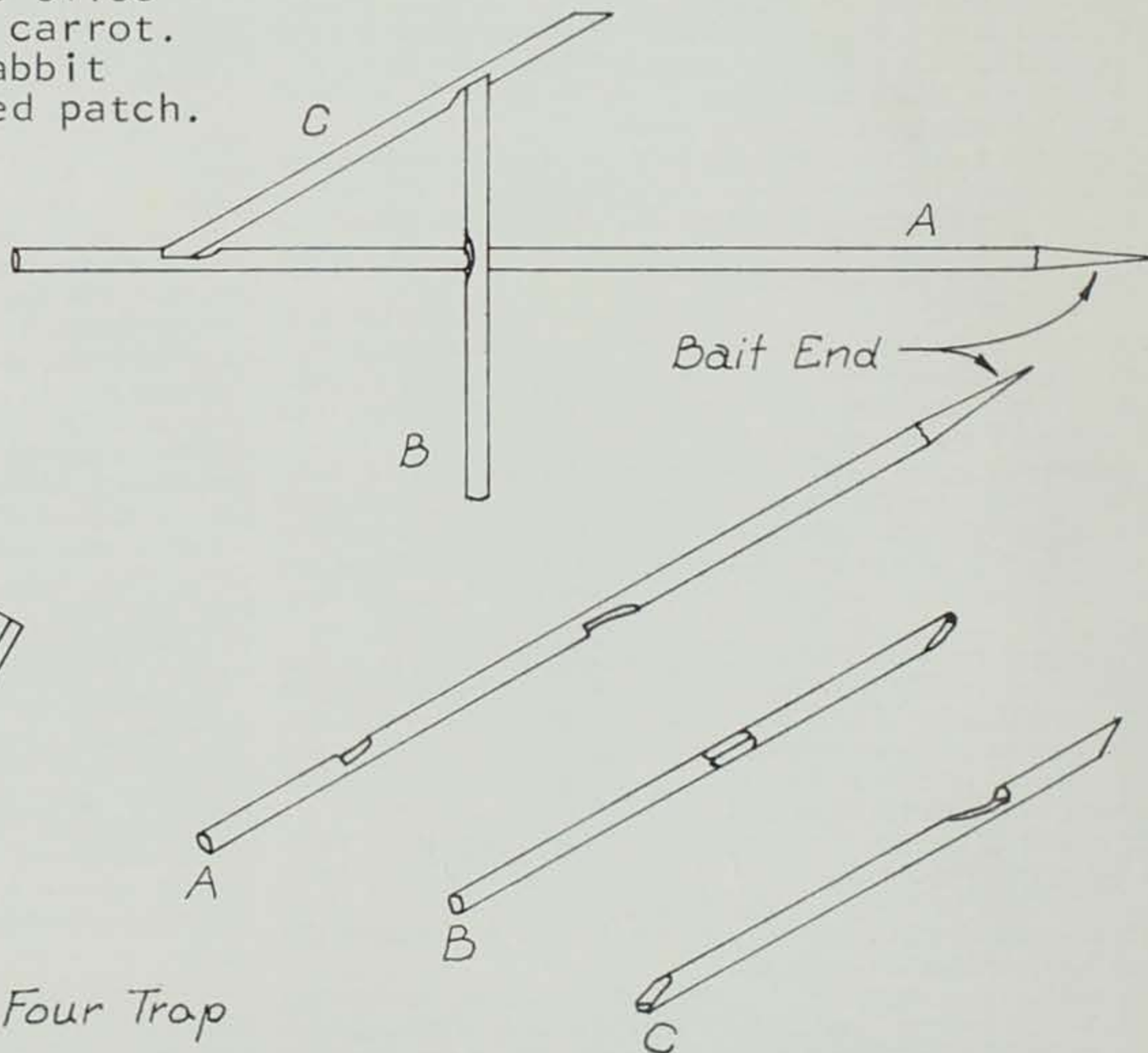


Figure-Four Trap



Drawn By Larry Pool